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Review (Acts 2:33-40)

Last time, we started by looking at Peter's sermon in some detail, and digging into his arguments as to why Jesus is Lord and Messiah:

33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

34 "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, 35 till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

Peter's important points:

- They are guilty of putting Jesus to death, but this was also God's plan.

- He refers to Psalm 16 to show how the Scriptures predicted the Resurrection.
- He reminds them how Jesus was attested to them by God with *miracles, signs, and wonders*: acts of supernatural power, events that amaze people, and supernatural works that point people to the activity of God.
- Peter references Psalm 110, which prophesies how Messiah would be elevated into Heaven and be seated at the right hand of God.
- Jesus is also the Son of Man, the Divine Man in Heaven whom God will one day send to rule the Earth.

The Life of the Church (2:41-43)

41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

- These 3,000 mirror what had happened when the Law of Moses was given and 3,000 people were judged because of their sins and died.
- Only some people gladly received the message and were baptized. Be alert for this dynamic as you go through the Book of Acts: there will be a mixed response to the preaching of the message of Christ.
- The believers continued on steadfastly in four different things. This means they were devoting themselves to those things.
- What did they pursue, and why were they so powerful and effective?

- The first thing was **the apostles' doctrine**. They learned the Word of God. Luke seems to be saying that this was teaching concerning Jesus and His salvation.
 - We shouldn't think that just because we're Christians and we have the Holy Spirit that we don't need teachers.
- A second thing it mentions was **fellowship**. This is the popular New Testament word *koinonia*. It means having things in common; it means sharing things.
 - They had a rich sense of belonging to one another, of being brothers and sisters in a way that even went beyond the bond of their Jewishness.
 - This was something that the Romans found disgusting!
- They also shared in **the breaking of bread**. The text actually says, "the breaking of the bread," and so this seems to refer to the Lord's Supper. This helped the Church remain focused on the Cross and the Resurrection.
- Finally, they continued steadfastly **in prayers** or the prayers. This may be Luke's way of telling us that they attended the regular services of prayer at the Temple. They must also have been praying all over Jerusalem in private houses. Church buildings as we know them would not be built for another two centuries.
- In verse 43: *then fear came upon every soul*. God must have visited them powerfully with His Presence, causing them to be filled with the fear of God. The fear of the Lord means we walk before Him with reverence and respect. The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is *clean*.

- Verse 43 also says that *many wonders and signs were done through the apostles*. Remember, Luke only records for us the events and speeches that move the action along as he tracks the spread of the Gospel.

Growing Together (2:44-47)

44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

- The beginning of this passage has often been used to assert that the first Christians were Communists of a sort who had no property. Indeed, many did sell everything that they had, but there was no compulsion to do so.
- Ananias and Sapphira were not struck dead not because they didn't give all their money, but because they lied about it. Peter said, "*While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?*" (Acts 5:4a).
- However, they did take care of one another with their material possessions. Believers used their possessions and their income to meet people's needs. It was motivated by Christian love and compassion.
- This charitable program was overseen by the leaders of the church.

- In verse 46 ...*they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart...* The translation “*gladness*” is likely too tame, too religious. The Greek word really means joy. As they went through their day together, they had real joy.
 - This is the same word Luke uses to talk about how John the Baptist leapt in his mother’s womb for joy (see: Luke 1:44). Jude used this word to tell us how the Lord can “...present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy...” (see Jude 24b).
 - When Christians are in love with Jesus and in love with one another, there will be a release of God’s joy among them!
- They had simplicity or sincerity of heart. Where people are truly serving Jesus there will be both joy and sincerity. There will be a lack of hypocrisy. The saints were too consumed with love for Christ to get trapped in sins of the heart.

In verse 47, they were ...*praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

- It was a worshiping church. *Acts* doesn’t show us many pictures of corporate worship, but we know how important it was to them. They desired His presence!
- It was a church that had the favor of God resting upon it. Most likely, because of their admirable lives, they were respected even by those who had not yet come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.
- Tradition tells us, for example, how James the Lord’s brother was known as *James the Just*, and respected by believers and non-believing Jews alike.

- And it was an evangelistic church. People were being saved – but notice that the Lord was adding newly saved people to the church every day.
- On Pentecost, God increased them by twenty-five times what they had started the day with (120 + 3000)!
- God can certainly send us great moves of the Spirit in which waves of people come rushing into the Kingdom. But perhaps more often than not, the Church grows in a steady manner.
- Constant revival activity leaves little time for proper growth and discipleship. It seems to be something that has, ironically, ruined many moves of God.
- Let's believe God for big days but also learn to cooperate with Him for steady, continual growth!

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